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## EDITORIAL NOTES

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The eighteenth educational conference of academies and high schools in relations with the University of Chicago was held at the university on November 11 and 12. Two years ago this conference took up the question of the curriculum of the elementary and secondary schools, and appointed a commission to consider the feasibility of modifying the course of study in some way which would enable the pupils to complete their college work at an earlier age than they do at present. The commission, consisting of twenty-one members, was divided into three committees of seven each, which reported last year upon the elementary, secondary, and college interests respectively. In the main, the reports agreed that there can be, and that there should be, an economizing of time for the pupil; but no recommendations were definitely adopted by the commission as a whole, and the organization was continued another year that further study might be made of the questions involved.

The conference this year listened to some papers which were devoted mainly to reports of what is being done in different places with the six-year high-school course. The tone of the papers was distinctly in favor of extending the secondary course so as to make it cover two years of college work.

The commission made practically no advance upon the work of last year, except to recommend that a commission of fifteen be appointed to continue the investigation, and to propose lines of study indicated by the following questions:

1. Is the present policy of differentiation between the elementary and secondary schools desirable; or should an effort be made toward greater unification in method and organization?
2. Should the elementary school correspond to the period of childhood,

and therefore should it provide for six years of school work from the ages of six to twelve years, instead of eight years as at present?

3. Should the secondary school correspond to the period of youth, and should it therefore provide for six years of school work from the ages of thirteen to eighteen, instead of four years as at present?

4. What revision of the curricula of the elementary and secondary schools, and what changes in methods of teaching, can be made that will contribute to economy of time and efficiency of work?

5. In order to secure a well-balanced development, and at the same time to contribute to the economy of time, can the school year be lengthened advantageously and minor vacations be more equally distributed?

6. Under what limitations should high schools undertake to do the work of the first two college years?

A seventh question was added from the floor in the conference, to the effect that an effort be made to state the periods of growth or development of the pupil in some other terms than years.

In regard to the distribution of the pupils' time in school and college, the high-school teachers are distinctly generous. They are generally willing to assume responsibility for either one or two years of the elementary course, or one or two—preferably two—years of college work, or possibly both. With most high-school teachers, too, it is perfectly clear as to how this change should be made. It is only a matter of scissors and paste: simply attach to the lower end of their present curriculum what is cut from the elementary schools, and paste to the upper end what is taken from the colleges, and it is done! Does this shortening really shorten?

From the time when the pupil enters school at six years of age until he takes his doctor's degree, it is, at present, normally eighteen years—eight in elementary, four in high-school, and six in college work. Last year the commission reported favorably upon reducing the elementary period to seven years; they then proposed so to readjust the high-school and college curricula as to save another year, and thus land the youth at twenty-two years of age where he now appears at twenty-four. This year, one of the questions of the commission indicates a tendency to make the reduction wholly in the elementary period.

#### Shortening the Curriculum

While everyone feels that there is considerable waste for the pupil as the whole curriculum is now organized, it is clear that the commission has done little of real value in the way of suggesting a practical reform. The chief source of waste is found in the fact that we now have three distinctly organized curricula. These at present are not related to each other in a natural sequence either in matter or method, and it is inevitable that the pupil should lose—that his development should be stayed—when he passes from one to the other. The net result of the commission's work has been to accentuate these divisions and to make them more formal. The suggestions made that any one be either shortened or lengthened are not aimed at the real trouble at all. If carried out, they could result only in an organization as artificial and fortuitous as that which now exists.

**Not a Question  
of Scissors  
and Paste**

It is to be hoped that the new Commission of Fifteen will transfer the question from the field of mechanics to that of psychology and pedagogy. A few things in this matter are fixed. In the first place, nobody can shorten a "nature-made" period of human development by applying to it a man-made course of study which has been prepared on the principle of calling three quarts a gallon. In the next place, it should be remembered that when development is urged beyond a certain rate it ceases to be development at all. The only possible way to reach the minimum of waste in the educational process is to secure the continued maximum efficiency of the pupil in his work. This is not attained now in either the elementary school, the high school, or the college. It never will be attained by simply sliding, mechanically, up and down the scale, the artificial divisions which exist at this time in the curriculum.

**Mechanics  
versus Psy-  
chology and  
Pedagogy**

In reorganizing the curriculum, there are two ideas that must be reconciled: one of these relates to the "all-around" teaching which has been supposed to be peculiarly appropriate in the elementary school, and the other to the "special teaching" which is thought to be particularly fitted to the high school. Here is one of the facts: Special teaching has penetrated the elementary school

**The "All-  
Around" Teach-  
er versus the  
Special Teacher**

everywhere, and it is bound to permeate as thoroughly this part of the system as it does the high school. Conditions have greatly changed from what they were when the "all-around" teacher flourished. There was but little to be taught then but the "three R's." Nowadays it is a physical, as well as a scholastic, impossibility for any one teacher to meet all of the recognized demands of the pupils in any grade. Manual training from its introduction has demanded the special teacher. The same is generally true of music. It is beyond question that special teachers are needed for domestic science, textiles, clay-modeling, drawing, painting, nature-study, geography, and other subjects in the schools when such studies are placed upon a satisfactory basis. It is not necessary to argue here for the benefits of expert special knowledge on the part of the teacher.

Under existing conditions, then, the question is: How can the idea of the "all-around" teacher be combined with that of the special teacher to secure the benefits of both? In the University Elementary School the plan pursued at present is as follows: Each group or grade has a head teacher (in this school called "critic teacher") who is solely responsible, under the principal, for all the work of the children under his or her charge. The special teachers of manual training, the arts, domestic science, and physical culture, regardless of their official position, stand related to the critic teacher, functionally, as his assistants, and each critic teacher organizes his teaching staff according to this idea. In special conferences the work of the grade is discussed and planned with sole regard to what seems to be best for the "all-around" welfare of the pupils. Each special teacher is expected to set forth the particular claims of his subject and to teach his subject; but he is expected to do so with a definite recognition of what the pupil needs in other directions. It is part of his business, therefore, so to work out the relations of his subject as to be of assistance in meeting those needs. Thus the special teacher in manual training, for example, is called upon to show how much demand the proper presentation of his subject makes for number, reading, drawing, writing, and so forth, and he is expected to meet the demand.

This does not mean, in the end, that he teaches his subject less, but that he teaches the children more. Each teacher of a particular subject, therefore, becomes a special teacher possessed with the "all-around" idea, and the effect upon the children is that of having not one, but many "all-around" teachers.

Of course, the plan succeeds only upon two conditions: first, that the special teacher has the motive to subserve the best interests of the whole child, and that he has pedagogic insight enough to work out the relations of his subject; second, that the special teachers be made finally responsible to the head or critic teacher of the group or grade. Nothing could be more fatal to the plan than to have the special teachers working after their own sweet will without a compact organization under a recognized head that is responsible for the whole. In practice, this plan does not lead to contention, as might be supposed. Each teacher who follows out the relations of his subject, as they approach and merge into something else, is only too glad to avail himself of the experiences of others who approach the pupil from different points of view. The varied knowledge concerning the pupils which is thus brought into a common fund, and the necessarily perpetual readjustment of subject-matter, combine to make harmony and to give an actual strength to the instruction that can never be realized by a single teacher of the old "all-around" type. The "all-around" teacher always has been something of a myth. In the ungraded country schools even, where he is the roundest of the "all-around" kind, he is usually a specialist in something—arithmetic generally, in earlier days—and does all of his teaching from that point of view.

As the elementary school is now beginning to avail itself of the advantages of the special-teacher idea, it is none the less important for the high school to begin to act upon the principle of the "all-around" idea. The chief weakness in high-school work is that each instructor teaches as though his pupils were all to become specialists in his particular branch of knowledge; and, further-

**Upon What  
the Success of  
the Plan  
Depends**

**Application  
of the Plan to  
the High  
School**

more, as though the proper way to specialize is to buy, beg, or steal all possible in one subject and to exclude and ignore as much as possible everything else. This results in unholy rivalries among the teachers and in disconnected thinking on the part of the pupils. Here is one place where there is real waste in school life, because the laws of symmetrical growth are trampled under foot and the pupil is allowed to drift. If the plan of organization proposed for the elementary school works well through the first eight years, there is no reason why it should not work equally well through the next four, and on through the college.

The principle of organization here maintained will apply to any stage of growth. The strong personal interest of the teacher that is maternal in its character in the early years will develop into a personal sympathy no less intense, though resting upon different grounds, in the period of adolescence, and in later years. Any plan which proposes methods for one period of school life that radically differ from those of another period is wrong. For development, throughout, is but a matter of growth, and growth is a biological fact. No scheme can be true in pedagogy which is false in biology. Pedagogy is but the organization of the developmental influences around a child, as horticulture is the organization of similar influences around a plant. The varying attitudes of mind of infancy, childhood, and youth only reveal from different points of view the same growing organism, which, while nourishing itself upon a great variety of things, always feeds in the same way.

The only way, therefore, actually to economize in the educational process is to forsake those methods of reform which tend to emphasize the breaks between elementary and secondary, and between secondary and college, education that already exist. The attention must be turned toward plans for unifying the curriculum from first to last, and to the development of methods that flexibly conform themselves at every stage to the sensitive, yielding, growing child and youth. This will finally remove the breaks that now exist even between any two consecutive years of school life.

W. S. J.